

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PN

SUBJECT: ASSEMBLY OFFERS TO EXTEND TORRIJOS IN POWER

SUMMARY: ON NOVEMBER 7, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY REQUESTED THAT TORRIJOS RETAIN SPECIAL POWERS AS CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT AFTER 1978, AND PROPOSED THAT CONSTITUTION BE AMENDED TO THIS END. ABSENT ANY INDICATION WE HAVE TO THE CONTRARY, OUR TENTATIVE VIEW IS THAT THIS WAS PROBABLY NOT INSTIGATED BY TORRIJOS HIMSELF. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES (NACR) IN EXECUTIVE SESSION WITH GENERAL TORRIJOS ON MONDAY AFTER-NOON, NOVEMBER 7, REPORTEDLY PROPOSED THAT TORRIJOS CONTINUE AS CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT AFTER 1978, AND THAT THE CONSTITUTION OF 1972 BE AMENDED TO THIS END.

2. LOCAL NEWS MEDIA (MOSTLY GOSSIP COLUMNS) REPORTED NOVEMBER 7 THAT NACR HAD REQUESTED A PRIVATE SESSION WITH TORRIJOS TO DISCUSS GENERAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, RUMORS THAT POLITICAL PARTIES WERE TO REEMERGE AND THE FUTURE OF THEIR INSTITUTION IF THIS OCCURED, AND THE QUESTION

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OF TORRIJOS' CONTINUATION IN POWER AND/OR CANDIDACY FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN 1978. SOME EARLY ITEMS REPORTED--ALTHOUGH THIS HAS NOT BEEN MENTIONED SINCE YESTERDAY'S SESSION--THAT SOME ASSEMBLY MEMBERS WERE ALSO INTERESTED IN EXTENDING THEIR OWN TERMS FOR ANOTHER SIX YEARS AS WELL.

3. NACR MEMBERS TOLD A REPORTED THAT THE "SECRET" SESSION (FBIS/PANAMA PA 080352Y) THAT TORRIJOS DECLINED TO RESPOND TO THIS PROPOSAL FOR THE TIME BEING, SAYING THE POINT MUST BE DECIDED BY "...TIME, CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE PEOPLE." TORRIJOS ALSO REPORTEDLY SAID HE HAD "EMPHATICALLY REFUSED" PROMOTION TO MAJOR GENERAL, AND THAT "PUBLIC OPINION MUST DECIDE" WHETHER POLITICAL PARTIES ARE TO BE ALLOWED. "HE EMPHASIZED THAT IF THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE WANT POLITICAL PARTIES, HE WILL AGREE, AND ADDED THAT HE COULD NOT GUARANTEE THE REELECTION OF THE 505 REPRESENTATIVES DURING THE COMING YEAR."

4. THIS REPORT WAS CARRIED WITHOUT COMMENT ON LOCAL TELEVISION EVENING NOVEMBER 7. ACAN-EFE ITEM WAS CARRIED BY ONE GOP-GUIDED MORNING PAPER ("CRITICA"), BUT NOT BY OTHERS, NOVEMBER 8. THERE HAS BEEN NO SUBSTANTIAL COMMENT. IT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT TORRIJOS WILL MEET WITH THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF STATE MORNING NOVEMBER 8, AND WILL CONTINUE TO MEET PRIVATELY WITH NACR THIS AFTERNOON.

5. FYI: THE CONSTITUTION (ARTICLE 140) GRANTS THE NACR POWER TO APPROVE, WITH OR WITHOUT ALTERATIONS, OR TO DISAPPROVE AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION PROPOSED TO IT BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LEGISLATION. SUCH AMENDMENTS MUST BE RATIFIED BY THE NACR INSTALLED FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE FOLLOWING TERM PRIOR TO THEIR ENTRY INTO FORCE. THE CONSTITUTIONAL ARTICLES DEALING WITH THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LEGISLATION ARE SILENT REGARDING AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION. BUT IN VIEW OF THE NORMALLY-RESTRICTIVE READING OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS OF THE NACR, IF APPEARS TO US THAT THE NACR WOULD BE CONSTRUED AS NOT HAVING THE POWER TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION ON ITS OWN VOLITION, BUT RATHER WOULD HAVE TO ACT IN RESPONSE TO A PROPOSAL FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LEGISLATION. WE KNOW OF NO SUCH PROPOSAL AT THIS TIME. UNDER ARTICLE 131 OF THE CONSTITUTION, THE CURRENT REGULAR SESSION OF THE NACR WILL TERMINATE NOVEMBER 11. UNDER ARTICLE 132, IT MAY ONLY BE CALLED INTO SPECIAL SESSION BY THE EXECUTIVE. END FYI.

6. COMMENT: THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE RECENT SPECULATION, AND MANY CONTRADICTORY REPORTS AND RUMORS, ABOUT TORRIJOS' PLANS. OUR BEST ESTIMATE HAS BEEN, AND REMAINS, THAT HE HAS NOT YET FINALLY MADE UP HIS OWN MIND ON THIS SCORE, AND THAT HE MAY WELL NOT DO SO UNTIL EITHER THE SENATE HAS ACTED ON THE NEW CANAL TREATY, OR IT BECOMES CLEAR TO HIM THAT THERE WILL BE

NO SUCH ACTION DURING 1978. FOR THIS REASON, AND IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY INDICATION WE KNOW OF TO THE CONTRARY, OUR TENTATIVE OPINION IS THAT THIS NACR MOVE WAS PROBABLY NOT INSTIGATED BY TORRIJOS HIMSELF. ALSO, THIS YEAR'S HAS BEEN THE LEAST-PUBLICIZED AND LEAST COMMENTED-UPON SESSION OF THE NACR IN RECENT YEARS; THE NACR HAS PRESUMABLY BEEN MEETING AS USUAL, BUT ASIDE FROM OCCASIONAL SQUIBS IN THE GOSSIP COLUMNS, ONE WOULD SCARCELY KNOW IT FROM THE MEDIA. THIS DOES NOT STRIKE US AS AN APPROPRIATE BUILDUP OF THAT BODY'S IMAGE AS THE LEGITIMATE EXPRESSION OF THE "POPULAR POWER" WHICH MIGHT BE BROUGHT TO OFFER TORRIJOS THE CROWN. END COMMENT.

JORDEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Status: NATIVE
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TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PN, (TORRIJOS HERRERA, OMAR)
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vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7c3a461f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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